



SEIU MARYLAND & DC STATE COUNCIL
1410 Bush Street, Suite F, Baltimore, Maryland 21230

Testimony in **SUPPORT of SB 514**
Health Facilities – Hospitals – Medical Debt Protection
Senate Finance Committee
February 25, 2021
1:00 PM

Presented to: Delores G. Kelley, Chairman
By: Terry Cavanagh, Executive Director

SEIU Maryland & DC State Council urges a **Favorable Report to SB 514.**

SEIU is the largest union in North America. We unite workers in health care, public service, including public education, and property services to improve lives and the services we provide. We represent over 50,000 workers in the Maryland/DC/Virginia region. Many of our members live paycheck to paycheck and one unexpected bill can push a struggling family into a crisis. Medical debt can be the cause of that crisis.

Medical pricing is not something we can haggle over like a used car, or wait for an item to go on sale like at the supermarket. If we're sick enough and lucky enough to get to a hospital, we don't ask about pricing because we're not in a position to walk over to the next hospital to see if maybe they are offering a special of the day on the kind of treatment we need. If we're accepted, we get the treatment and deal with the costs later. Is that irresponsible? Maybe so, but should we expect that?

Too many Marylanders, who are least able to afford it, are being hounded by medical debt collectors by some of the richest hospitals in the world. SB 514 would apply a common-sense approach to this issue, protecting low-income patients, while recognizing hospitals' financial needs.

SB 514 places reasonable requirements on hospitals to report to the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) regarding their debt collection practices, while placing needed restrictions on hospitals who have been preying on low-income patients, and not fully accessing alternative sources of payment.

Marylanders who are subject to these debt collection practices can have their lives seriously disrupted. Often the result of that disruption is greater use of public assistance, thus placing a unnecessary burden on taxpayers. By passing this bill, we will invest in our people's independence. In a state with an "all-payer" system, we should see the wisdom of providing high-quality, affordable, health care for all, while ensuring reasonable debts get repaid reasonably and responsibly.

We ask a Favorable Report on SB 514. Thank you.